

CONFIRMATION AT REDEEMER EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN PARKTON, MD

“WHAT YOU HAVE AS HERITAGE, TAKE NOW AS TASK; FOR
THUS YOU MAKE IT YOUR OWN.”

-GOETHE

What, Then, Is Confirmation?

“Obviously confirmation is not a divine ordinance; it is not a sacrament. This has to be said, not because anyone in the Lutheran Church has taught it to be such but because the aura about confirmation and the esteem in which it is held make it practically untouchable as some divine ordinance. Nor does the importance of confirmation lie in the rite. During the major portion of the Lutheran Church’s history, confirmation was not universally observed with a ceremony. The heart of confirmation lies in the instruction in the Word that precedes the rite. The real confirmation takes place in the confirmation of faith by the Word, for through the Word God continues to confirm the faith begun in Baptism and nurtured by the home and the church. When pastors use confirmation instruction for children who have not been baptized or who have previously been instructed, they use it in a way not originally intended. They must therefore make the necessary modifications to meet this special need. But basically the period of instruction is the confirming period. Therefore the word confirm should be used not for anything the catechumens do but for what God does... Since confirmation has been subject to so much buildup through dramatic effects, the tendency to exaggerate its importance has become all the greater. The Christian’s baptism and his first attendance at Holy Communion are rarely regarded as highpoints in his life, but confirmation nearly always is. Ever overemphasis of confirmation is at the expense of God’s means of grace. Instruction in the Word becomes terminal, Baptism is thought to need some completing act or further confirmation, and preparation for the Lord’s Supper becomes an intellectual exercise. However, when confirmation receives its proper and more humble place, it becomes an edifying practice leading the young Christian closer to his Savior and to his church through reverent and joyful use of the means of grace.”

- Arthur C. Repp,

Confirmation in the Lutheran Church: An Examination and Reconstruction of the Purpose, Plan, and Practice of Confirmation (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 177-180.

THREE ASPECTS

❖ Study

God spoke to the world in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. In doing so, God has chosen the world in Christ to be the recipients of his gifts. In order for maturing catechumens to gain a deeper understanding of how and why God has chosen them in baptism and seeks to feed them with His body and blood a major component of the program revolves around a diligent study of the scriptures guided by a Lutheran confession.

- The Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures
 - Lutheran Study Bible (Purchased for the catechumen by the congregation)
- The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther
 - CPH 1991 Edition (Purchased for the catechumen by the congregation)
- Journal
 - Blank Spiral (Purchased for the catechumen by the congregation)
 - The journal will be put together in conjunction with the sessions week to week. By the time the process concludes each catechumen will have put together their own confirmation journal which will function as a keepsake and resource for later reference.
- Two Year cycle—One Year Taught Twice
 - Six Units—Six Chief Parts of the Small Catechism (Note: Different Order)
 - The Creed
 - Baptism
 - The Lord's Prayer
 - The Lord's Supper
 - The Ten Commandments
 - Confession & Absolution
 - Scriptures—Vary each Unit and Year
 - Ex: Unit 1: Year 1
 - Genesis, John, Philippians (Selected Portions)
 - Topics—Addressed within the curriculum
 - At various points throughout the year it is hoped that things such as a devotional life will be spoken about in more detail. As such, there is no intention of creating a unit specifically on topics of importance but rather the facilitator will fold such important issues into the already existing units so as to help the student understand the all-encompassing nature of the life of faith.

- Purpose:
 - The Small Catechism is representative of how the Lutheran Church understands the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. By wrestling with the six chief parts twice over a two-year period it is hoped that they will come to be understood as the lens through which we view the scriptures. Additionally, by using varying scriptural references it will be demonstrated that the Small Catechism is a thoroughly biblical and a useful tool for personal study of the scriptures.
- Method:
 - Each session will be taught using a variety of tactile and visual aids in order to help each student comprehend the materials. The methods employed will make use of the journal mentioned above and time will be taken in order to fill out the journal and help each student with retention of information.
- Memory Work/Sermon Reports:
 - It is not the intention of the facilitator to assign either of these types of material. Each catechumen is expected to be in worship on Sunday morning with the family as often as is possible. Moreover, time spent in the Word should not be viewed as a chore but a privilege and joy. While it is hoped that students will commit certain passages and ideas to memory, they will not be forced to do so.
- Final Project:
 - Each catechumen will be given an opportunity to create their own final project. The goal of the project will be to demonstrate how God has confirmed their faith through this process.
 - Ex: Poster displayed in the fellowship hall recounting important moments in the catechumen's faith journey.

❖ Service

The Christian life is one of service. God works through people in order serve and care for His creation. In order to help each catechumen come to that understanding, that God is using them to serve others a second major component of the program revolves around service to the church, their family, and society.

- Acolyte/Crucifer
 - Each catechumen is expected to participate in Sunday morning worship as an acolyte and crucifer. While every effort will be made to accommodate schedules, every parent is expected to honor the assigned dates, and if

unavailable, find a substitute person. (This is done in addition to the prescribed service hours below.)

- Service Hours—12 Per Year
 - Church—4 Hours
 - While these hours do not include the time as an acolyte/crucifer, any other aspect of service to this congregation, rendered either to individuals or the congregation as a whole, may be counted toward it.
 - Ex: 15 minutes vacuuming after fellowship on Sunday morning.
 - Home—4 Hours
 - These hours are up to the parent’s discretion. It is hoped that these hours will be done in addition to the “normal” chores or activities each catechumen already participates in by virtue of being in the family.
 - Ex: 30 minutes helping clean out the attic.
 - Society—4 Hours
 - These hours may be completed at any other area in society in which the catechumen provides service.
 - Ex: 60 minutes helping sort clothes at the Lutheran Mission Society
 - Each individual is expected to record the time spent and report it with a parent’s signature on the provided form in order to maintain accountability. The forms may be turned in at any time. (Electronic copies available.)

❖ Social

God created human beings in relationship to one another. No Christian exists in isolation for they are all part of the body of Christ. In order to foster an understanding of fellowship a third major component of the program will revolve around and be encompassed by social activity.

- Family meals (Subject to Change)
 - It is hoped that each week would begin with a time of fellowship and food in which the parents, catechumens, and facilitators would be given a chance to enjoy the company of one another before venturing into the time of study. Each family/facilitator would be expected to provide a portion of the “pot luck” meal.
- Friends

- Everyone is encouraged to invite friends from outside of the congregation to come and participate week to week. There are no requirements on the friend(s) other than that they participate in the session's activities.
- Study
 - It is hoped that each lesson will provide the catechumens with several opportunities to interact with one another in order to create their journals and work through the unit lesson. This will be done through games, small group and large group discussions, and also time for the catechumens just to hang out with one another.
- Parental Involvement
 - It is hoped that at least one parent from each family would remain present for the sessions so that they too can hear what is being taught so as to reinforce it throughout the week. While schedules do not always allow for such involvement, this time of confirmation should be made a priority for the entire family as it is for the church. Time/discussion material will also be provided for the parents so that they can, in their own small group time apart from the catechumens, help one another in caring for each catechumen at home by sharing struggles, challenges, and joys with one another.
- Banquet
 - Because confirmation takes place within the context of a congregation it is part of the joy and responsibility of the congregation to recognize and affirm the process from beginning to end. The banquet will be an opportunity for the congregation to celebrate the catechumen's hard work and sacrifice throughout the year. When a catechumen is ready to participate in the Rite of Confirmation the banquet will serve as a stage for them to present their final project. This does not mean a presentation must be, unless of course one so desires, but functions as a safe space to show how God has confirmed His baptismal promise in the catechumen.

THREE RITES

❖ Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate

- The Sunday before the confirmation year begins each youth will be received into the catechumenate, during the worship service. Each youth's parent(s) will also be invited to the front of the congregation to participate in the rite. At this time each catechumen will receive the three gifts from the congregation (bible, catechism, journal). The congregation will also pledge their support to each catechumen during this time. Catechumens who are in their second year, while not receiving the gifts a second time, will be expected to participate in a renewal of their participation. The rite will be printed in the bulletin and will not be complicated.

❖ Rite of First Communion

- On Maundy Thursday of their first year each catechumen will receive their first communion. The goal of this is to help separate the idea that being confirmed grants any special status or privilege in the church other than those prescribed the constitution of the congregation. The Lord's Supper is a gift that is meant to forgive, strengthen, and renew the recipient. As these catechumens seek to have the Lord confirm His promises to them it is indispensable that they receive such a gift from Christ Himself. The catechumens will have gone through at least four units by this time, even though the date changes each year, the last of which is the unit on the Lord's Supper. They will be asked to sit down with the pastor and their parents in order to discuss their comfort level.
 - Any catechumen not wishing to partake in this during their first year is allowed to exempt themselves after discussion with their parents and the pastor. Parents should feel the responsibility of discerning whether or not their child is ready to receive the sacrament. Be mindful, as Luther says in his catechism, "Truly he is worthy and well prepared who believes these words, given and shed for you." The parents in consultation with the pastor will help each of the catechumens arrive at a place of comfort in receiving a precious gift for their good.

❖ Rite of Confirmation

- At the conclusion of the two-year program each catechumen will participate in this rite. It is a time to celebrate what the Lord has done for them during the past two years by confessing the faith that is their own in front of the family of faith that guided the experience. The families of each catechumen will be invited to the front to participate in a blessing at which time each catechumen will receive a gift from the congregation to help foster the continuation of God's confirmation of his promises throughout the years ahead. Again the congregation will pledge themselves to each maturing disciple so as to show the unyielding support of the church for her members.

SERVICE HOURS

Who did you serve?

Describe the service you gave:

How long did you spend doing it?

What do you think this service means to the people receiving it?

How are their lives different?

What part of this service did you find difficult?

What part of this service did you find enjoyable?

How are you different as a result of it?

Would you do this service again? Why or Why not?

Supervisor's Signature:

Parent's Signature: